

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY TUNIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1522

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E.O.: 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, OVIP, TS

SUBJ: GOT INVITATION FOR 20TH ANNIVERSARY TUNISIAN

INDEPENDENCE CELEBRATIONS

1. GOT HAS GIVEN US COPY OF LETTER FROM FONMIN CHATTI TO SECRETARY EXTENDING INVITATION FOR USG TO SEND "A MINISTERIAL-LEVEL DELEGATION TO REPRESENT THE GOVERNMENT AND PEOPLE OF THE UNITED STATES" AT FESTIVITIES MARCH 19 TO 21, MARKING 20TH ANNIVERSARY OF TUNISIAN INDEPENDENCE MARCH 20. ORIGINAL IS PRESUMABLY BEING DELIVERED TO DEPARTMENT.

2. EMBASSY BELIEVES ATTENDANCE BY HIGH-LEVEL U.S. DELEGATION WOULD BE BENEFICIAL AND TIMELY. AS DEPT. AWARE, PRESIDENT BOURGUIBA IS WELL ALONG IN YEARS. HE AND GOT HAVE BEEN WARMING UP FOR 20TH ANNIVERSARY DURING PAST YEAR, AS EACH DATE SIGNIFICANT IN THE HISTORY OF THE STRUGGLE FOR INDEPENDENCE HAS BEEN CELEBRATED LOCALLY. MARCH 20 MAY WELL PROVE TO BE THE MOST MEMORABLE, IF NOT THE LAST SUCH MAJOR ANNIVERSARY, FOR BOURGUIBA HIMSELF. THE CLOSE PERSONAL RELATIONS WITH USG AND WITH AMERICANS WHICH BOURGUIBA CHERISHES WILL DOUBTLESS LEAD HIM TO EXPECT THAT USG WILL PARTICIPATE SIGNIFICANTLY IN THIS CELEBRATION, AND SENDING OF PROMINENT PERSONALITY TO ATTEND WILL, FROM OUR STANDPOINT, CONSTITUTE USEFUL MEANS OF EXPRESSING STRONG USG INTEREST IN WELFARE AND PROGRESS OF TUNISIA.

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3. FRENCH GOVERNMENT HAS ANNOUNCED THAT MINISTER OF INTERIOR

PONIATOWSKI WILL HEAD FRENCH DELEGATION ATTENDING CELEBRATIONS. SINCE BOURGUIBA IS PLANNING TO VISIT USSR IN LATE SPRING, IT VERY LIKELY THAT SOVIETS WILL ALSO SEND HIGH-RANKING DELEGATION. WE BELIEVE THAT NUMBER OF OTHER COUNTRIES WILL FOLLOW SUIT.

4. IN OUR CASE WE RECOGNIZE THAT HEAVY COMMITMENT ON PART OF TOP USG OFFICIALS MAKE IT UNREALISTIC FOR US TO COUNT ON CABINET-RANK ATTENDANCE. NEVERTHELESS, IT OCCURS TO US THAT HIGH-LEVEL USG OFFICIAL MIGHT BE IN THIS GENERAL AREA AROUND TIME OF 20TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS, AND COULD WITHOUT UNDUE INCONVENIENCE INCLUDE TUNIS IN HIS ITINERARY. ALTERNATIVELY, EMBASSY SUGGESTS DELEGATION BE HEADED BY A SENATOR WITH FOREIGN RELATIONS INTERESTS, SUCH AS SENATOR PERCY. HE MIGHT BE ACCOMPANIED BY DISTINGUISHED AMERICAN FROM PRIVATE SECTOR WHO HAS ALREADY MADE CONTACTS IN TUNISIA. IN THIS CONNECTION WE SUGGEST FORMER COMMERCE UNDER SECRETARY TABOR, WHO VISITED TUNISIA LAST YEAR AND MADE VERY FAVORABLE IMPRESSION HERE.

5. NO DETAILS OF CEREMONIES AND OTHER ACTIVITIES PLANNED HAVE BEEN ANNOUNCED. MOFA HAS PROMISED SUPPLY THIS INFORMATION AS SOON AS AVAILABLE.
SEELYE

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